

***Poverty, Unemployment and the Boko Haram Insurgency in the Lake Chad Basin  
Sub-Region: a Capability Deprivation Approach (2011 – 2016)***

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## Abstract

*This study attempts to unravel the ‘raison d’etre’ of the Boko Haram sect in the Lake Chad sub-region which Nigeria is part of. The paper examine the existential driving factors behind the insurgency through interrogation of the raging debate that poverty and unemployment are principally responsible for the emergence of Boko Haram insurgency. While there are credible and empirical evidence from previous studies in regards to correlation between the identified variables, this study questioned the epistemological and methodological approaches adopted in the existing studies, and suggests different paradigm and approaches in understanding the BH phenomena, namely, ‘capability deprivation’ approach. The study adopted the qualitative method of data collection and analysis; it relied on secondary sources of data, using the technique of desktop content analysis. To analyze the issues raised, the study was anchored on three relevant theories: ‘the Social Exclusion / Cumulative Disadvantage Theory; Relative Deprivation Theory; and the Frustration-Aggression (F-A) theory, respectively. Finally, the study proffers some of the policy options for addressing these causes and conflict and recommends, among other measures, as well as a compass for further research, in an attempt to finding a lasting panacea to the seemingly intractable conflict.*

**Keywords:** Boko Haram, Capability Deprivation, Functionings, Insurgency, Lake Chad Basin, Poverty, Social Justice, Terrorism, Unemployment.

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Scholars, researchers and policy institutions have in the past decades, argued that the economic factor of poverty and youth unemployment are major drivers of insurgency. For instance, an African Development Bank (ADB) study examining youth unemployment in 24 developing countries over 30 years concludes that this economic factor plays a significant role in a nation’s risk of political instability (Ansaaku, 2017). Insecure environments, then, become ripe for terrorism. The 2006 U.N. Global Counter-terrorism Strategy and the 2015 Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism both acknowledge that poverty and youth unemployment make the spread of violent

extremism easier. Without jobs, violent extremist organizations can be an attractive source of income, and countries that fail to create employment opportunities for young people witness more incidents perpetrated by these groups.

The twin economic factors of poverty and unemployment, seen to be the major drivers to insurgency and terrorism, are said to be most endemic in the Lake Chad Basin (LCB) sub-region, the area covered in our study. In the LCB sub-region (Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon and Niger Republic), the Daily Trust newspaper of 28<sup>th</sup> February 2018 for instance recently quoted the Executive Secretary of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) – Mr. Sanusi Abdullah, as saying that “*about two million people of the area are at present depending on humanitarian assistance, adding that **the region had the highest poverty and birth rates in the world***”. Moreover, these four sub-regional countries have large and rapidly growing youth populations. Over 50 percent of the population in sub-region is between 18 and 35. According to the CIA World Factbook, about 62 percent of Nigeria’s population is below age 25, and in Chad and Cameroon, this figure rises to about 62 percent and 66 percent respectively. Niger’s under-25 population constitutes a staggering 68 percent. Large proportions of these populations are unemployed and struggle to make ends meet, which further exacerbates the poverty level. Unemployed youth in this sub-region are often those drawn to violent extremism, as unemployment and poverty can make young people dissatisfied with their national governments. These disgruntled youth often choose to engage in terrorism to communicate their discontent. Feelings of resentment were made worse by the government’s unfulfilled promises to resolve the issues that sparked earlier rebellions. Although tensions appear to have abated recently (since 2016 to present – i.e., Q3, 2018), yet, terrorism activities are still ongoing on a lower albeit in a war of attrition format. Processes to address the people’s concerns are slow, while terrorist networks and resource-sharing with foreign groups such as the Boko Haram are thriving (Ataguba, et al, 2013).

In Nigeria in particular, a recent World Bank Country Report on Poverty (See, World Bank, 2016), portrays an equally sordid picture. According to the report, relative to poverty reduction in the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa and other lower-middle-income countries, poverty reduction in Nigeria has been less responsive to economic growth.

Three factors determine this low responsiveness. First, high growth rates have been accompanied by comparatively high rates of population growth. Second, similar to other resource-rich economies in the developing world, growth does not necessarily translate into more jobs or more opportunities for everyone. Third, inequality has been expanding quickly and has adversely affected poverty reduction. Compared with other Sub-Saharan African countries, Nigeria is also losing ground on a number of key indicators. Nigeria has not done well on indicators such as the rate of accumulation of physical and human capital and in the household access to basic services. Underperforming in these indicators can have a long-term negative impact on growth and can hamper the country's capacity to reduce poverty.

In response to the problems highlighted above, studies have been conducted by various scholars in an attempt to unravel the reasons why insurgents engage in insurgency in this volatile sub-region. The main thrust of this study however, is not to restate these various other studies, debates and empirical works on presenting the factors principally seen to be responsible or key drivers to the Boko Haram insurgency. On the contrary, this paper seeks to interrogate the approaches to our understanding of those key factors or independent variables seen as attributing to the insurgency, namely, poverty and unemployment.

The traditional or dominant paradigm, both in its epistemological and methodological orientation with regards to measurements, assessment and analysis of poverty and unemployment, are in large parts, linked to a single dimension (i.e., unidimensional) – usually income or consumption. This approach enjoys the advantage of simplicity, under the assumption that money is a “universally convertible asset that can be translated into satisfying all other needs (Anand & Sen, 1997; Ataguba, Ichoku & Fonta, 2013). However, it has been acknowledged that poverty and unemployment, and particularly the former, which is a manifestation of insufficient wellbeing, goes beyond monetary indicators to include others that are non-monetary (Bourguignone & Chakravarty, 2003 cited in 2013:331). Implicit in the unidimensional approach is that an individual's status on one dimension (i.e., income) strongly predicts that individual's status on the others. While this may well be true to some extent, it is important to note

that “*higher level of capability is conducive to deriving resources needed to elevate one’s economic welfare and yet not all with higher capabilities choose to do so*” due to other considerations like altruism, culture, religion (as it is the case with the Boko Haram phenomenon), or even life-style. The same is true of social exclusion between the monetarily non-poor and the poor, and the relationship between income and happiness (2013:331). Our discourse thus, acknowledges the multidimensional nature of poverty and deprivation, instead of the narrower unidimensional perspectives of the earlier studies cited. In doing so we also acknowledge Sen’s (1993) capability framework alongside more traditional conceptions. The study also assesses the determinants and the extent of overlap across different constructs of poverty/deprivation.

## 1.2 CONCEPTUAL EXPLICATIONS

The concepts of Boko Haram; Insurgency; Poverty and terrorism are central to this discourse therefore the way in which they are used deserves some clarification.

### 1.2.1 Boko Haram

This concept (subsequently used in its shortened form - BH), is an adjectival phrase which describes a group normally known as “*Jama’at AhlusSunnah Lid Da’awat Wal-Jihad*”, which literally translates to “group committed to propagating the prophet’s teachings and Jihad” (Adanrele, 2012:21; Ibrahim, 2014:166; Azom and Okoli, 2016:152). For the purpose of this discourse therefore, we refer to BH as that violent group that have resorted to insurgency and brigandage to actualize its utopian dreams in Nigeria and other three Lake-Chad basin states (Chad, Niger Republic and Cameroon), since 2009.

**1.2.2 Insurgency:** Insurgency as a concept has been aptly defined within the context and theme of this study, by Obasi Igwe (2007:205) as an armed opposition to constituted authority by any domestic forces. The roots of insurgency, according to the scholar, are always located in the *injustice* perpetrated by the powers that be, and the ineffectiveness of either the existing politico-legal machinery or the civil society to address it. Hence,

most insurgencies are premised upon the philosophy of a just cause and popular acceptance.

### **1.2.3 Poverty**

We have identified two broad epistemological approaches to the definition of the term ‘poverty’. The first part is the unidimensional approach, also labeled as income-poverty or the ‘money-centric’ conceptualization of the term. Income poverty is thus defined as “monetary deprivation in terms of earned income which makes it difficult to provide and enjoy basic needs of life” (see: Okafor, 2004:148; Obi, et al, 2016:110-111, etc).

On the second part is the multidimensional approach to the definition of poverty. In this perspective, poverty (otherwise referred to as ‘human poverty’) is seen as a totality of all non-monetary incapability, deprivations or denials in all the three dimensions of human development or wellbeing. Human development in this regard, is seen as “a total progress and achievements made in a country, which predispose the people in that country to live a long and healthy life; to acquire knowledge required to adapt to the environment; and finally to possess an income capacity required to provide what the people need to maintain a decent standard of living” (See: Okafor, 2004:148; Todaro and Smith, 2006:193-195; Sen, 1999:xi – xiv).

### **1.2.4 Terrorism**

From the etymological point, the word terrorism comes from Latin and French words: *terrere*, and *terrorism*, meaning “to frighten” and “state rule by terror” respectively (Onuoha, 2008:59). It should be noted that, there is no unanimous definition of who a terrorist is, as there is no generally accepted definition of terrorism among scholars and experts in this field. Terrorism is an elusive concept that has been argued to mean different things. In fact, Johari (2012:717); Onuoha, J. (2008:58); and Obasi Igwe (2007:439), asserts that the term ‘terrorism’ is inherently difficult to use in a precise or unequivocal way. This view, according to Onuoha, is accepted by experts, jurists and policymakers despite the fact that countless acts of terrorism have been documented during the past 25 centuries. Thus far, however, the common denominator amongst the various definitions of the concept – ‘terrorism’ seem to have been encapsulated in Obasi

Igwe, who defined it as “*a premeditated attack against non-belligerent targets; an activity aimed at intimidating the opponent either through covert, unconstitutional or unlawful warfare, or the use of illegal weapons and methods, sometimes in an undeclared and ill-defined (asymmetrical) war*”.

### **1.2.5 Capabilities**

Capabilities have been defined as “the freedom that a person has in terms of the choice of ‘functionings<sup>1</sup>’, given his personal features (conversion of characteristics into functionings) and his command over commodities (Sen, 1999:75). Thus, for the scholar, human well-being simply means being-well in the basic sense of being healthy, well nourished, well clothed, literate and long-lived and broadly, being able to take part in the life of the community, being mobile and having freedom of choice in what one can become and can do (Todaro & Smith, 2011:18).

### **1.2.6 Lake Chad Basin**

The Lake Chad Basin (LCB) spans through the West, Central and North Africa. It is shared by Nigeria in the south-west of the Chad Basin with a share area of 179,000 km<sup>2</sup>. The western part covering 674,000 km<sup>2</sup> is in Niger, while Chad is at the centre, and occupies the largest portion of 1,123,000 km<sup>2</sup> of the basin. In the southwest of the basin also is Cameroon with an area of 47,400 km<sup>2</sup>, and the southern part covering 216,000 km<sup>2</sup> is in the territory of the Central African Republic (CAR). Again in the north and northwest, 91,000 km<sup>2</sup> and 5,100 km<sup>2</sup> are in Algeria and Libya respectively, while Sudan is in the eastern part of the basin covering an area of 97, 900 km<sup>2</sup> (LCBC, 2012).

In terms of the conventional basin area, the distribution of the area among the riparian countries is as follows: 42% in Chad; 28% in Niger Republic, 21% in Nigeria, and 9% in Cameroon. The Lake Chad Basin and its adjoining geographical areas are the bedrock of the Boko Haram insurgency since its inception in 2002.

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1 Functionings have been described by Sen (see Obi, et al, 2016:10-11) to mean, what a person does or can do with the commodities of given characteristics which he come to possess or control.

### 1.3 THE PROBLEMATIQUE

A plethora and growing literature on the question of why the Boko Haram come into being mainly focuses on unidimensional view of the concept of poverty (see among others: Joseph Hanlon, 2018; Apamshan, Ismail & Zengeni, 2017; Nwanegbo, Umara and Ali, 2017; and Adenrele, 2012), etc. These works have largely explored the explication of Boko Haram insurgency with poverty and unemployment along ‘*classical*’ approach to the conceptualization of the independent variables. Very few if any, have made anecdotal references to the issues in the context of the paradigm shift of multidimensional conceptualization, namely, ‘*capability deprivation*’ approach, which we hypothesize, as more appropriate framework of analyzing and conceptualizing the subject matter, at least, within the environmental context of the study. It is in this context that we wish to argue that what is missing are empirical studies using the appropriate epistemological as well as methodological approaches, which is necessary to deepen our understanding, hence to guide necessary policy initiatives, of how and why Boko Haram and other insurgencies evolves.

Using logic would probably situate the misconceptualization in previous studies in better perspectives and will also explain our approach better. We *adopted* a logic cited in Campbell and Stanley<sup>2</sup> (1963) which fits well into our line of argument. Accordingly, logicians sometimes tell a story of the problem drinker. A pathetic figure, he was in danger of losing his job, his marriage and family. His friends told him that he felt the way he did each day because of his heavy drinking on the previous night. But being of a scientific bent, he decided to measure just what was causing his woes. The first night he drank scotch (whiskey) and soda; the next morning he was unable to report to work and he abused his wife and children. The second night he drank gin and soda; the next morning he experienced the same unfortunate effect. And so it was each night – brandy and soda, rum and soda, ‘ogogoro’ and soda, etc. – always with the same after-effects. At the end of the week, he felt confident that he had the answer to his problem: ***cut out the soda!***

Naive, you say? Everyone knows that whiskey, gin, rum, brandy, and others have high alcohol content, and that it was his alcohol consumption that led to his drunkenness, cantankerousness, lassitude and such other uncouth behaviour, or whatever the state. We say his finding was spurious because it attributed the effect to the wrong cause. His research design called for very gross measures of one variable – soda; while they failed to

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2 See: Donald T Campbell and Julian C. Stanley, *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Research* (Chicago: Rand McNally & Company).



penetrate precisely to the common factor – alcohol – hidden in all the other variables: scotch, gin, ogogoro, et cetera, which he was treating as independent of each other. Thus we decide that his research design and manner of measuring variables led him to the wrong conclusion. But hang on; was it? Perhaps if he had consumed each kind of liquor straight on the rocks, he might have found it unpalatable. Cutting out the soda might have led him to reduce or cut out completely his alcohol intake. A research approach or design to measure this hypothesis would focus on the interactive effects of alcohol and soda, and their joint contribution to the observed effect. Or perhaps we want to untangle the entire chain of factors that related his drinking to his unfortunate states. We may still note the apparent contribution of alcohol to his problems. But we now want to know why he ingested large quantities of alcohol. Did he dislike his job? Were his wife and children too demanding and inconsiderate? Was it something physiological? If any of these factors led him to drinking, would he have harbored the same feelings and acted the way he did toward his job, wife, and family without the after-effects of alcohol? Did the alcohol consumption actually alleviate, instead of induce pathological social, psychological and physiological states?

It is within the logic stated above that we propose, that adopting the classical unidimensional conceptualization of the independent variables of poverty and unemployment became tantamount to the habitual drinker musing over the manipulation of perhaps the wrong variables in trying to reach a solution to his problem, and in its place, we propose the multidimensional ‘capability deprivation’ conceptualization of the independent variables, which we adopt in this study.

#### **1.4 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE**

To facilitate an in-depth explication and understanding of the link between poverty, capability deprivation, unemployment and the incidence of Boko Haram insurgency in the Lake Chad Basin sub-region, three theories were used: the Social Exclusion / Cumulative Disadvantage theory; the Relative Deprivation Theory and its offshoot – Frustration-Aggression (F-A) theory.

#### **1.4.1 The Social Exclusion / Cumulative Disadvantage Theory**

The concept of poverty has been redefined and broadened in recent years to cover other spheres of human existence, thus, situating the concept within the multidimensional lenses adopted in this study. Hence, from the 1990s, the European Union has focused on the term '*social exclusion*' to encompass other forms of deprivations or denial of rights, goods and services, and the inability to participate in the normal relationships and activities, available to the majority of people in a society, whether in economic, social, cultural or political arenas (Levitas et al., 2007, p. 9). Marlier and Atkinson (2010) relate the concept of social exclusion to the lack of voice, power, and representation whereby individuals and groups are involuntarily barred from political, economic, and social activities, preventing their full involvement in the society in which they live.

Labonté, Hadi, and Kauffmann (2011) define it as a situation in which people are deprived from participating in economic, social, political and cultural activities at a level considered to be normatively acceptable. Social exclusion focuses less on the state than on the processes leading to it, primarily a lack of: material resources (social necessities) income to acquire such necessities and/or state subsidies for their provision access to formal labour markets access to affordable/adequate housing access to educational and health care opportunities freedom from discrimination opportunities for social participation (social networks) power or voice to affect the policy choices of governments influencing all of the above conditions. A review of existing social exclusion frameworks, indicators and measures led to identification of nine principle domains that capture processes of social exclusion/inclusion: (i) employment and work income (ii) economic resources (iii) material resources (iv) education and skills (v) health (vi) housing (vii) social resources (viii) community resources and (ix) personal safety.

In their study, Gallie, Paugam, and Jacobs (2003:1) found that poverty leads to a vicious circle of social exclusion. They observe that unemployment makes people vulnerable to poverty, and poverty in turn makes it more difficult for people to return to work thereby increasing the risk of social isolation. Income generated from a productive activity determines one's level of poverty and is a significant measure of the degree of isolation, stigmatization and sense of belonging to a community (Stewart et al., 2009). While social exclusion is being associated with unemployment and level of income,

Gallie et al. (2003:1) however notes that these are dependent on socio-cultural factors such as household structure and patterns of local sociability in different contexts. The perspectives of poverty based on the theory of social exclusion dwell on cumulative disadvantage whereby a comfortable majority co-exist with a disadvantaged minority who are collectively excluded from socio-economic opportunities in the society. It runs contrary to the *individualization* perspective, which views poverty as a relatively transient and individualistic phenomenon or experience. The individualization theory views poverty as a phenomenon, which occurs independent of traditional stratification factors (Layte & Whelan, 2002:209).

**1.4.1.1 Applying the Theory:** In applying both perspectives to the nature of poverty in Nigeria and the rest of the Lake Chad Basin countries, there are evidences to show how poverty ravages socially excluded people (e.g. unemployed youths, the Almajiri, the rural/slum dwellers, etc.), and how poverty is experienced at an individual level. Both perspectives appear to be valid in understanding the manifestations of poverty in the sub region, and how this snowballs into the endemic Boko Haram insurgency.

**1.4.2 Relative Deprivation Theory:** this theory is a derivative of the psychological theory of frustration-aggression developed by Dollard and his colleagues (Onuoha, 2008:75). It postulates that interference with goal-directed behaviour creates frustration which in turn, leads to aggressive response usually directed against the disrepute frustrating agent (Dollard et al; 1939). The basic theoretical proposition is that a psychological variable, relative deprivation, is the basic precondition for political (and in this context, religious and inter/intra-ethnic violence) of any kind and that the more widespread and intense deprivation is among members of a population, the greater is the magnitude of violence in one form or another. Relative deprivation as defined by Gurr (1968) is the actor's perception of discrepancy between their value expectation (the good and condition of life which they believe they are justifiably entitled and their value capabilities, the amount of those goods and conditions that they think are able to get and keep).

As Dowse and Hughes (1972) observed, in social life men come to value many things: wealth, status, power, security, equality, freedom, the nation, (and to a great extent,

spiritual beliefs and values), etc. When they cannot achieve these values, dissatisfaction, anger and ... aggression occur. Thus, if a group, such as the BH, feels an intense sense of relative deprivation with respect to a class of values important to it, then it has considerable appetite and propensity for collective violence. If a group feels that collective violence is a legitimate response to its anger, and that violence is the only means to alleviate their discontent, then the likelihood of the violence is greater (Onuoha, 2008). Whether or not deprivation culminates into religious or political violence depends on the intensity and scope of deprivation. Most people at some time experience deprivation of one sort or another, but this rarely leads to collective violence. The deprivation then must be sufficiently intense and experienced by a sufficiently broad sector or a strategically located section of the society in order to create a potential for religious or political violence.

**1.4.2.1 Applying the Relative Aggression Theory to Our Discourse:** In applying this theory to the study, it can be deducted that violence and extremism including insurgencies such as the Boko Haram, MEND, IPOB etc, are manifestations of collective discontent caused by a sense of relative deprivation by the group members of such insurgencies. While it is true that a few (perhaps it is valid to say that, that few is even statistically insignificant number in comparative terms) of the ‘bourgeoisie class’, such as a one-time Borno state Commissioner for Religious Affairs have been *alleged* to having links with the Boko Haram (see the Daily Trust Newspapers, 14<sup>th</sup> October, 2014:1); membership of the insurgency organization is overwhelmingly made up of the mostly youths in the lower rung of the society (the ‘have-nots’). This point was reinforced by Usman (2015:93) who argued that “Boko Haram crisis broke out due to the failure of governance in Nigeria to halt extreme poverty especially among the youths of the northern extraction. Thus, a nation that allows its youths to be idle is sitting on a time-bomb of potential social upheavals, because frustrated people seek relief in religion (Tell Magazine, 10<sup>th</sup> August 2009:38).

**1.4.3 The Frustration-Aggression Theory:** In 1939, Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, and Sears published a monograph on aggression in which they presented what has come

to be known as the frustration-aggression hypothesis (F-A)<sup>3</sup>. This hypothesis proved to have an immense impact. It appears to have influenced current Western thinking on aggression more profoundly than any other single publication. For more than three decades, the F-A hypothesis has guided, in one way or another, the better part of the experimental research on human aggression (Cf. Geen, 1972; Zillmann, 1979). Perhaps more importantly, however, the views of aggression that it involves seem to have become widely adopted and accepted; they have become commonplaces.

This theory assumes that individuals or groups have goals of sort, that much of their behavior is purposive in the sense of goal-seeking and that if this behavior is not prevented in some way, the individual or group is likely to behave quite peacefully. Since this condition is unlikely to be regular, or at least, always fulfilled in the human condition of scarcity, the theory predicts that the result is likely to be aggressive behavior. As Dowse and Hughes (1972, cited in Onuoha, 2008:66) have argued, the frustrated individual or group is likely to attack the believed source – which is not necessarily the real source of frustration, and if the attack fails to remove the frustration, the aggression is likely to recur. Basically, a person thwarted in the attempt to reach a goal is made angry and likely to strike at the imputed source of frustration. As Dowse and Hughes noted, in social life, man come to value many things: wealth, status, power, security, equality, freedom, the nation, and so on. When they cannot achieve these values, or when achieving once value means losing another, dissatisfaction, frustration, anger and often, aggression sets in. in similar context, Moyer (1976) argues that the normal tendency toward violent aggression is increased by frustration of desires. Accordingly, when a goal presumably attractive to two or more individuals is made available in such a way that it can be obtained only by one of them, the end result is frustration for the loser. These frustrated actors in the political system can become potential insurgents or terrorists. Davies (1976) observed the frustration may lead to the building up of ‘ionized particles in the brain’, which when released, lead to violent behaviour, either individually or collectively. The scholar further asserted that aggressive action requires four main steps,

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3 (PDF) *Theories of Aggression: Frustration-aggression (F-A) theory*.. Available from: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/30469705\\_Theories\\_of\\_Aggression\\_Frustration-aggression\\_F-A\\_theory](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/30469705_Theories_of_Aggression_Frustration-aggression_F-A_theory) [accessed Aug 26 2018].

thus: (i) activation of demand; (ii) frustration of demand; (iii) mental process of deciding how to overcome frustration; and (iv) Action.

**1.4.3.1 Applying the Frustration-Aggression (F-A) Theory:** It is argued that the disdain for western education and the modern state system by radical extremist group including Boko Haram is the consequences of looming poverty, unemployment and injustice (Mohammed, 2014). Eventually, this development hatched a lot of frustration among millions of unemployed youths for inability to achieve basic necessities of livelihood. Hence, youth radicalisation continues to thrive in the mist of poverty, unemployment and injustice. Aggression becomes the ultimate expression of anger and agony. The extra-judicial killings of Boko Haram leaders (Mohammed Yusuf and others) by the Nigerian Police, after he was captured live by the Nigerian Military forces in 2009 has been a departure for the sect's violent aggression against the Nigerian state.

## **2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1.1 The Boko Haram Insurgency, its Evolution and its Sub-regional Dynamics**

Boko Haram began as an isolated sect in Yobe state, north-eastern Nigeria, in 2002 under the leadership of *Salafist*<sup>4</sup> preacher Mohamed Yusuf. At the outset, like earlier Islamist 'reform' groups in the region, the sect leadership's discourse of religious revival and a return to what they believed to be the true tenets of Islam were portrayed as the antidote to the corruption, bad governance, poverty and other (mainly Western-imported) societal ills all too familiar to northern Nigerians. Following Yusuf's extrajudicial killing by the government in 2009, the scale and brutality of Boko Haram violence escalated under the leadership of his deputy, Abubakar Shekau. The sect began targeting those they

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4 What is Salafism? If you ask Salafis, they will tell you that Salafism is the pristine Islam that was practiced by the Prophet Muhammad and the earliest Muslims (*al-salaf al-salih*, "the pious predecessors"). If you ask most journalists and security analysts, they will tell you that Salafism is a hardline form of Islam exported from Saudi Arabia and associated with al-Qaeda and the so-called Islamic State. Studying Salafism is important not just for analyzing jihadist movements or clarifying twentieth-century Muslim history, but also for better understanding the role of religion in contemporary life. What claims to authenticity are religious movements making? What mechanisms sustain these claims? How do these mechanisms shape the preaching and writing of religious leaders, and the expectations and preoccupations of their audiences? (See: Alexander Thurston, 2017: Salafism in Nigeria – an Introduction).

considered complicit in Yusuf's killing, including the Nigerian military and police, as well as others they associated with the Nigerian state. The UN became a target in 2011 due to its development support to the government.

Reports of the sect's widespread use of female and child suicide bombers and mass abductions – notably the kidnapping of the so-called Chibok girls from a school in Borno state – began to receive international media attention in 2014. In November 2014, the bombing of the Central Mosque in Kano again focused international attention and concern on the scale of the sect's reach outside its base in the Sambisa forest in Borno state. Boko Haram's campaign to capture and control territory in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states escalated further in 2015, alongside attacks in Cameroon, including repeated abductions and the mass kidnapping of children. The following month, the border town of Bosso in Niger and Ngouboua village in Chad came under attack, signalling the spread of violence beyond Nigeria's borders, and making it clear that Niger, Chad and Cameroon had become part of Boko Haram's fighting ground. A long-time Al-Qaeda sympathiser, in spring 2015 Boko Haram pledged its allegiance to Islamic State and changed its name to Islamic State West African Province (ISWAP).

#### **2.1.1.2 Boko Haram's Regional Foothold in the Lake Chad Basin**

From the outset, nationals from Niger Republic, Chad and Cameroon travelled to northern Nigeria attracted by Yusuf's charismatic sermons and by the small loans offered to his followers. This provided the foundation for a multinational sect, dominated by the Kanuri ethnic group, stretching across the Lake Chad sub-region. While many members came from, and still belong to, the rural and poorer sections of north-eastern Nigerian society, in its early days Boko Haram also included children of the Nigerian elite, and could count on prominent sponsors among northern politicians and businessmen. Exploiting the cultural, ethnic and religious ties that Chad, Niger Republic and Cameroon share with northern Nigeria; Boko Haram has conducted extensive cross-border smuggling of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) and supplies; as well as the recruitment of fighters. For the most part, these borderlands were used as safe havens and were spared from attack, possibly to avoid reprisals by local authorities. It became clear in 2013, however, that the sect was willing to risk the attention of local authorities in its

need to bring in new sources of funding to support its growing regional operations. In February 2013, Boko Haram abducted a French family near Waza national park in Cameroon. The group reportedly received \$3m in ransom and the exchange of Boko Haram detainees for the hostages<sup>5</sup>.

The question now is: to what extent are the economic factors of poverty and unemployment, serve as primary triggers or driving factors for the BH insurgency?

### **2.1.2 The Nexus between Poverty and the Boko Haram Insurgency**

It has been noted earlier in the discussion (theoretical framework No.1 in particular), that ‘among several other ills, poverty breeds anger, hatred, envy and conflict’. Poverty thus, apart from providing a fertile habitat for breeding insurgency; is also the cause of many of Nigeria’s other social problems.

The nexus between poverty and terrorism or insurgency has been recognised from ancient times. The genesis of such link between poverty and social revolts or uprisings was aptly traced to Medieval Europe and applied to the African context, the Boko Haram phenomena in particular, by Muzan (2014:15). The scholar submitted that Euripides recognised it in early Greek times. For Engels, the peasant war was the culmination of revolutionary trends which shaped much German social history from the seventeenth century forward, such that:

*“Although local insurrections of peasants can be found in mediaeval times in large numbers, not one general national peasant revolt, least of all Germany, can be observed before the peasant war ... [which came about] ... when the lowest stratum of the population, the one exploited by all the rest, arose, namely, the plebeians and the peasants”.*

The social conditions of sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe are applicable in present-day Nigeria. The same trend has manifested itself in regions as diverse as Asia, Latin America and elsewhere on the European and African continents. In Peru, Latin America for instance, IPS report in 1998 indicated that unemployment and poverty led to 12 years of insurgency, which have turned the one-peaceful capital of Peru into one of the most violent cities in Latin America with women and children the main victims of the

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5 Source: BBC News, 27<sup>th</sup> April 2015, Accessed at the URL:  
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-22320077>



growing insecurity (Portillo, 1998). Closer home, in Mozambique, Hanlon (2018), quoting a speech of the country's President Filipe Nyusi (30<sup>th</sup> July, 2018 in Tete, Mozambique) reported that "poverty and unemployment are behind the insurgency in Cabo Delgado region of the country". He said that insurgents captured by the military, upon interrogation, have cited poverty and youth unemployment in the impoverished Cabo Delgado, as reasons they took up on insurgency.

In Nigeria, leaders and scholars have echoed concurrence to this causal link between poverty and insurgency. For instance, the Emir of Kano Muhammad Sanusi II, in November 2017, at the Northern Regional Conference on "Security, Justice and Development: Effective Implementation of Interventions," organised by Prisoners Rehabilitation and Welfare Action (PRAWA) in Kano<sup>6</sup>, attributed the spate in violent crimes and siege of other criminalities to endemic poverty and inequality in Nigeria. He stressed that justice, development and economies were all linked together while tasking the leaders and the elite class to help create more wealth and income opportunities for all. He held that most security problems, all over the world, had their roots in the economic and justice systems of the society adding that poverty breeds angry and discontented people, who in turn, resort to extreme violence against the society to ease their frustration. He acknowledged the widespread poverty in the country, exemplified by lack of income opportunities, lack of access to education, poor medical facilities, among others, adding Nigeria had been listed to overtake India, as the next poverty capital of the world by 2018. Likewise, in an empirical study titled "**Why Do Youth Join Boko Haram?**" under the auspices of the United States Institute of Peace, conducted by Dr. Freedom Onuoha in 2014, a correlation between the independent variables of poverty and unemployment and the dependent variable – Boko Haram insurgency, was to a certain extent, established. In that study, the scholar asserted that:

*"Unemployment and poverty make youth vulnerable to radicalization. (These twin factors) are socioeconomic challenges that are not only intricately interconnected but glaringly evident in northern Nigeria..... In Borno and Kaduna states, survey respondents*

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6 Source: The Sun News Online, accessed on 17 August 2018, (Emir Sanusi links violent crimes, insurgency to poverty, inequality in Nigeria), URL: <http://sunnewsonline.com/emir-sanusi-links-violent-crimes-insurgency->

*identified the high incidence of unemployment and poverty that prevail in the state as the second most important reason why youth engage in religious-based violence. In Kaduna state, 83 percent of respondents reported that unemployment and poverty are important factors. In Kano, 92 percent cited them as important. This is not to argue that unemployment and poverty are direct causes of youth radicalization; rather, privation and other frustrating conditions of life render youth highly vulnerable to manipulation by extremist ideologues. As Komolafe has argued, even if unemployment and poverty are not the main factors in radicalization in Nigeria, “the tendency to produce suicide bombers is greater in a community defined by mass misery and joblessness than the one in which basic needs of food, education, health, housing, and sanitation are met for the majority of the people” (Onuoha, 2014:5).*

#### **2.1.2.1 Dimension of Poverty in the Lake Chad Basin (LCB) Sub-Region**

As indicated earlier in this discourse, countries of the Lake Chad Basin are among the world’s least developed economies. Some are ranked at the bottom of the Human Development Index (HDI), calculated on the basis of long and healthy life, education index and decent standard of living (UNDP, 2010). The indices are presented in a way that if it is low, it can be used to highlight national insufficiency in both economic policy framework, and quality of life and social welfare (see Davis and Quinlivan, 2006). In sub-Saharan Africa, half of the population i.e., about 380 million people are poor. This number lives on under \$1.25 a day and lack access to basic amenities (World Bank, 2008; Banerjee and Duflo, 2006). The bulk of the population of the LCB countries that make up this statistics, are 'dwellers' in rural and isolated areas. These include small scale farmers, artisanal fishers, nomadic herdsman, wage labourers, displaced people, unemployed women and youths, etc. In the isolated zones where these poor people reside, they lack necessary infrastructure and social protection and safety nets initiated to ameliorate poverty.

Literacy level in the LCB is also quite low and therefore poses great concern. It is perhaps so because in the zone, education is not treated as part of the basic rights of the citizens. This is contrary to the fact that human development and human rights are mutually reinforcing, helping to secure the well-being and dignity of all people, building self-respect and the respect of others (UNDP, 2009b). In the circumstance, nothing is left

of Sen's capability thesis, if for a telling illustration; we have only an estimated literacy level of 35.4%, 28.7%, and 56.6% of people between 15 years and above respectively in Chad, Niger and CAR? What about the situation in Nigeria where the literacy level is only slightly above half of the population, and leaving in its trail, the problems of "Almajiri" in the north and the "area-boys" (street urchins) syndrome in the southwest?

#### 2.1.2.2 Poverty as Capability Deprivation

It has been argued that in analyzing social justice, there is a strong case for judging individual advantage in terms of the capabilities that a person has, that is, the substantive freedoms he or she enjoys to lead the kind of life he or she has reason to value. In this perspective, poverty must be seen as the deprivation of basic capabilities rather than merely as lowness of incomes, which is the standard criterion of identification of poverty. The perspective of capability-poverty does not involve any denial of the sensible view that low income is clearly one of the major causes of poverty, since lack of income can be a principle reason for a person's capacity deprivation. Indeed, inadequate income is a strong predisposing condition for an impoverished life. If this is accepted, what then is all this fuss about, in seeing poverty in the capacity perspective (as opposed to seeing it in terms of the standard income-based poverty assessment)? The claims in favor of the capability approach to poverty are, we believe, the following:

- 1) Poverty can be sensibly identified in terms of capacity deprivation; the approach concentrates on deprivations that are *intrinsically* important (unlike low-income, which is only *instrumentally* significant);
- 2) There are influences on capability deprivation – and thus on real poverty – other than lowness of income (income is not the only instrument in generating capabilities); and
- 3) The instrumental relation between low income and low capability is variable between different communities and even between different families and different individuals (the impact of income on capabilities is contingent and conditional).

The third issue (above) is particularly important in considering and evaluating public action aimed at reducing poverty or inequality. Various reasons for conditional variations have been discussed in the literature (and in our earlier discussion on social justice), and

it is useful to emphasize some of them specifically in the context of practical policymaking.

- First, the relationship between income and capacity would be strongly affected by the age of the person (e.g., by the specific needs of the old and the very young), by gender and social roles (e.g., through special responsibilities of maternity and also custom-determined family obligations), by location (e.g., by proneness to flooding or drought, or by insecurity and violence in some inner-city living), by epidemiological atmosphere (e.g., through diseases endemic in a region) and by other variations over which a person may have no – or limited control<sup>7</sup>. In making contrasts of population groups classified according to age, gender, location and so on, these parametric variations are particularly important.
- Second, there can be some “coupling” of disadvantages between: a) income deprivation and b) adversity in converting income into functionings<sup>8</sup>. Handicaps, such as age or disability or illness, reduce one’s ability to earn an income. But they also make it harder to convert income into capability, since an older, more disabled, or more seriously ill person may need more income (for assistance, for prosthesis, for treatment etc.) to achieve the same functionings (even when that achievement is at all possible). This entails that “real poverty” (in terms of capability or deprivation) may be, in a significant sense, more intense than what appears in the income space. This can be a crucial concern in assessing public action to assist the elderly and other groups with “conversion” difficulties in addition to lowness of income.
- Third, distribution within the family raises further complications with the income approach to poverty. If the family income is used disproportionately in the interest of some family members and not others (for example, if there is a systemic “boy preference” in the family allocation of resources), then the extent of the

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<sup>7</sup> For example, hunger and malnutrition are related both to food intake and to the ability to make nutritive use of that intake. The latter is deeply affected by general health conditions (for example, by the presence of parasitic diseases), and that in turn depend much on communal healthcare and public health provisions).

<sup>8</sup> See for instance, James Smith’s works (Journal of Economic Perspectives, vol.13, 1999) wherein he discussed other coupling types between 1. Under-nutrition generated by income poverty; and 2. Income poverty resulting from work deprivation due to under-nutrition.

deprivation of the neglected members (girls in the example considered) may not be adequately reflected in terms of family income. This is a substantial issue in many contexts; sex-bias does not appear to be a major in the family allocation in many countries in Asia and North Africa. The deprivation of girls is more readily checked by looking at capability deprivation (in terms of greater mortality, morbidity, undernourishment, medical neglect, and so on) than can be found on the basis of income analysis. This issue is clearly not as central in the context of inequality and poverty in Europe or North America, but the presumption – often implicitly made – that the issue of gender inequality does not apply at the basic level to the “Western” countries can be, to some extent, misleading. For example, Italy has one of the highest ratios of “unrecognized” labor by women vis-à-vis recognized labor included in the Standard Labor Accounts<sup>9</sup>. The accounting of the effort and time expended, and the related reduction in freedom, has some bearing in the analysis of poverty even in Europe and North America. There are also other ways in which intra-family divisions are important to include among other considerations relevant or public policy in most parts of the world.

- Fourth, *relative* deprivation in terms of *incomes* can yield *absolute* deprivation in terms of *capabilities*. Being relatively poor in a rich country can be a great capability handicap, even when one’s absolute income is high in terms of world standards. In a generally opulent country, more income is needed to buy enough commodities to achieve the *same social functioning*. This consideration – pioneeringly outlined by Adam Smith in the *Wealth of Nations* (1776), is quite central to sociological understanding of poverty, and it has been analyzed by W.G. Runciman (1979), Peter Townsend (1980) and others.

For example, the difficulties that some groups of people experience in ‘taking part in the life of the community’ can be crucial for any study of social exclusion. The need to take part in the life of a community may induce demands for modern equipment (televisions, Digital Video Recorders – DVDs, automobiles, etc.) in a country where such facilities are more or less universal (unlike what would be needed in less affluent countries), and this imposes a strain on a relatively poor person in a rich country even when that person is at

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<sup>9</sup> See: the UNDP, Human Development Report, 1995.

a much higher level of income compared with people in less opulent countries. Indeed, the paradoxical phenomenon of hunger in rich countries – even in the United States – has something to do with the competing demands for these expenses.

What the capability perspective does in poverty analysis is to enhance the understanding of the nature and causes of poverty and deprivation by shifting primary attention away from *means* (and one particular means that is usually given exclusive attention, viz, income) to *ends* that people have reasons to pursue, and correspondingly, to the *freedoms* to be able to satisfy those ends. The examples briefly considered here illustrate the additional discernment that results from this basic extension. The deprivations are seen at a more fundamental level – one closer to the informational demands of social justice; hence the relevance of the perspective of capability-poverty.

### **2.1.2.3 Income Poverty and Capability Poverty**

While it is important to distinguish conceptually the notion of poverty as capability inadequacy from that of poverty as lowness of income, the two perspectives cannot but be related, since income is such an important means to capabilities. And since enhanced capabilities in leading a life would tend, typically, to expand a person's ability to be more productive and earn a higher income, we would also expect a connection going from capability improvement to greater earning power and not only the other way around.

The latter connection can be particularly important for the removal of income poverty. It is not only the case that, say, better basic education and healthcare improve the quality of life directly; they also increase a person's ability to earn an income and be free of income-poverty as well. The more inclusive the reach of basic education and healthcare, the more likely it is that even the potentially poor would have a better chance of overcoming poverty and by extension, penury.

The importance of this connection was a crucial point of focus of a study carried out by Drèze and Sen (1995)<sup>10</sup> in India on economic reforms. The results of that study revealed that the economic reforms have opened up for the Indian people economic opportunities that were suppressed by overdue control and by the limitations of what had

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<sup>10</sup> See: Jean Drèze and Amartya Sen (1995). *Economic Development and Social Opportunity*, Delhi: Oxford University Press.

been called the “*License Raj*”. Yet, the opportunity to make use of the new possibilities is not independent of the social preparation that different sections of the Indian community have. While the reforms were overdue, they could be much more productive if the social facilities were there to support the economic opportunities for all sections of the community.

While these connections between income poverty and capability poverty are worth emphasizing, it is also important not to lose sight of the basic fact that the reduction of income poverty alone cannot possibly be the ultimate motivation of anti-poverty policy. There is a danger in seeing poverty in the narrow terms of income deprivation and then justifying investment in education, healthcare and so forth on the ground that they are good means to the end of reducing income poverty. That would be a confounding of ends and means. The basic foundational issues force us, for reasons already discussed, towards understanding poverty and deprivation in terms of lives people can actually lead and the freedoms they do actually have. The expansion of human capabilities fits directly into these basic considerations. It so happens, that the enhancement of human capabilities also tends to go with an expansion of productivities and earning power. That connection establishes an important indirect linkage through which capability improvement helps both directly and indirectly in enriching human lives and in making human deprivations rarer and less acute. The instrumental connections, important as they are, cannot replace the need for a basic understanding of the nature and characteristics of poverty.

#### **2.1.2.4 Bridging Inequality as a Tool for Social Justice**

The treatment of inequality in economic and social evaluation involves many dilemmas (Sen, 2001:92). Substantial inequalities are often hard to defend in terms of models of fairness. Adam Smith’s concern with the interest of the poor (and his outrage at the tendency for those interests to be neglected) related naturally to his use of the imaginative device of what it would look like to an “impartial spectator” – an inquiry that offers far-reaching insights on the requirements of fairness in social judgment. Similarly, John Rawls’s idea of “justice as fairness”<sup>11</sup> in terms of what can be expected to be chosen in

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<sup>11</sup> John Rawls (1971). *A Theory of Justice*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

hypothetical “original position” in which people do not yet know who they are going to be provides a rich understanding of the demands of equity, and yields the anti-inequality features that are characteristic of his “principles of justice”. Patent inequalities in social arrangements can also be difficult to justify in terms of reasonableness to actual members of the society (for example, the case for these inequalities being one that others “cannot reasonably reject”: a criterion that Thomas Scanlon<sup>12</sup> has proposed – and powerfully used for ethical evaluation). Certainly, severe inequalities are not socially attractive, and momentous inequalities can be, some would argue, downright barbaric. Furthermore, the sense of inequality may also erode social cohesion, and some types of inequalities can make it difficult to achieve even efficiency.

And yet, attempts to eradicate inequality can, in many circumstances, lead to loss for most – sometimes even for all. This kind of conflict can arise in mild or severe forms depending on the exact circumstances. Models of social justice – involving the “impartial spectator”, or the “original position”, or not-reasonable-rejection – have to take note of these diverse considerations.

Not surprisingly, the conflict between aggregative and distributive considerations has received a remarkable amount of professional attention among economists. This is appropriate since it is an important issue. Many compromise formulas have been suggested for evaluating social achievements by taking note simultaneously of aggregative and distributive considerations. A good example is A.B. Atkinson (1970)’s “equally distributed equivalent income”, a concept that adjusts the aggregate income by reducing its accounted value according to the extent of inequality in income distribution, with the trade-off between aggregative and distributive concerns being given by the choice of a parameter that reflects our ethical judgment.

There is, however, a different class of conflicts that relates to the choice of “space” or of the focal variable in terms of which inequality is to be assessed and scrutinized – and this relates to the subject matter of social justice considerations. Inequality of incomes can differ substantially from inequality in several other “spaces” (i.e., in terms of other relevant variables), such as wellbeing, freedom and different

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12 Scanlon, T. (1982). “Contractualism and Utilitarianism”, in *Utilitarianism and Beyond*, Edited by Amartya Sen and Bernard Williams, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.



aspects of the quality of life (including health and longevity, etc.). even aggregative achievements would take different forms depending on the space in which the composition or the “*totaling*” – is done (for example, ranking societies in terms of average income may differ from ranking them according to average health conditions).

The contrast between the different perspectives of income and capability has a direct bearing on the space in which inequality and efficiency are to be examined. For example, a person with high income but no opportunity of political participation is not “poor” in the usual sense, but is clearly poor in terms of an important freedom. Someone who is richer than most others but suffers from an ailment that is very expensive to treat is obviously deprived in an important way, even though she would not be classified as poor in the usual statistics of income distribution. A person who is denied the opportunity of employment but given a handout from the state as an “unemployment benefit” may look a lot less deprived in the space of incomes than in terms of the valuable – and valued opportunity of having a fulfilling occupation. Since the issue of unemployment is particularly important in some parts of the world (including contemporary Europe), this is another area where there is a strong need to seize the contrast between income and capability perspectives in the context of inequality assessment.

## **4.0 Conclusions and Policy Recommendations**

### **4.1 Conclusion**

Poverty and unemployment as socio-economic phenomena which have been blamed and linked to terrorism as the root causes. These twin evils are capable of causing discontent and social change within the populace. The relationship between poverty and terrorism as explained in the paper is not sufficient enough and remains unclear. However, there are factors that motivate terrorism such as religion, ethnicity and political interest which are capable of brain-washing the unemployed youths who become tools in the hands of the actors.

### **4.2 Recommendations**

Following the findings, these recommendations are hereby made:

First, conditions and situations that encourage the rise of terrorism in Nigeria need to be tackled head-on by all sections of the society. At this level the fight against terrorism ceases to be the exclusive duty of security agencies, or political leaders. Religious leaders, traditional leaders, teachers, artisans, et cetera ought to factor into the fight against terrorism. This could be achieved through a broad framework of organized and coordinated tasks for all strata of the society, because these terrorists are not ghosts, they do not dissolve into thin air before, during, and after attacks. They are mostly Nigerians who come from villages, have family members, and other friends who they speak with each day that passes.

Second, lack of social control have contributed to the rise of terrorism in Nigeria, hence government should productively engage the teeming youth population of Nigeria. Adequate infrastructure to take care of their sports, academic, spiritual, economic, and leisure needs ought to be put in place in towns and villages to divert their youthful energies to productive ventures instead of engaging in protests, petty crimes, and terrorism.

Third, poverty index in the LCB in general, but in Nigeria in particular, is higher than expected. A huge proportion of the youths of Nigeria live in abject poverty, hence Varin (2016) notes that, “61% of the population (of Nigeria) falls under the poverty line...” This is one of the major reasons for the rise of terrorism in Nigeria, especially when we consider that Nigeria has an estimated population of about 175 million people.

Fourth, the nature and dynamics of the phenomena under review is of such a complex socio-cultural-political nature which makes it amenable to qualitative rather and quantitative; or, at least, a mixture of the two approaches. Thus, further in-depth qualitative research in highly imperative particularly along the various facets of the capability deprivation approach to poverty and unemployment.

Other recommendations calls for the prioritizing the following steps to save lives:

1. Put protection of civilians at the centre of response.
2. Scale up the food and nutrition response in Nigeria and the region.
3. Increase access to more, better and safe quality education.
4. Safeguard humanitarian space: Safe movement to reach more people in need.

5. Strengthen leadership of the response and improve humanitarian coordination.
6. Ensure all refugee or displaced returns are safe, voluntary and dignified.
7. Build resilience and increase local capacity.

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